

With Michael Cusick as front-runner, Democrats will interview others, vote on candidates



Assemblyman Michael Cusick is a Democratic front-runner who has not officially declared his candidacy. (Advance file photo)



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[http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2015/01/district_attorney_daniel_donov_6.html] as their candidate to run for the empty seat in Congress, Democrats seem to have a way to go before they settle on a pick.

Staten Island Democratic Chair John Gulino said Monday he will interview each individual expressing interest in running -- between five and seven people -- and once there have been official declarations of candidacy, there will be a party convention to choose the candidate.

"I'm old fashioned in a lot of ways, that people who are interested you must interview them and see what they have to say," he said.

Party sources have said Assemblyman Michael Cusick (D-Mid-Island) is the front-runner but Gulino would not comment on that, saying all those interested will be given an opportunity to interview and put their best foot forward.

"Mike Cusick is a gentleman, he's very well-liked ... he would make an excellent candidate," the party chairman said.

He said he has spoken to Cusick and former Congressman Michael McMahon about possible candidacies. He said he also has spoken to or has plans to speak to Brooklyn Assemblyman William Colton, Brooklyn Councilman Vincent Gentile, and Staten Islander Robert Holst, co-founder of the Middle Class Action Project.

He said there are one or two other unnamed people who expressed interest.

"We're going to do something on or before the end of the month," to narrow down the list to serious candidates, he said.

After the Island Democrats select their candidate, Gulino will meet with Brooklyn Democratic Chairman Frank Seddio to discuss who the nominee will be for the bi-borough race.

"We have always been on the same page when selecting a candidate," Gulino said.

Cusick, still mulling a run, said, "We're working together, we're working and discussing everything with the leaders of the party and the rank and file members of the party to make sure that everyone has a say and that we do this right."

The assemblyman has spoken to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and while they are itching to get him to Washington, D.C., for a meeting, busy legislative sessions in Albany may prevent that, he said.

"As of right now, it's just been the initial call that they have seen my name and they'd like to talk about the race just in general terms," he said.

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